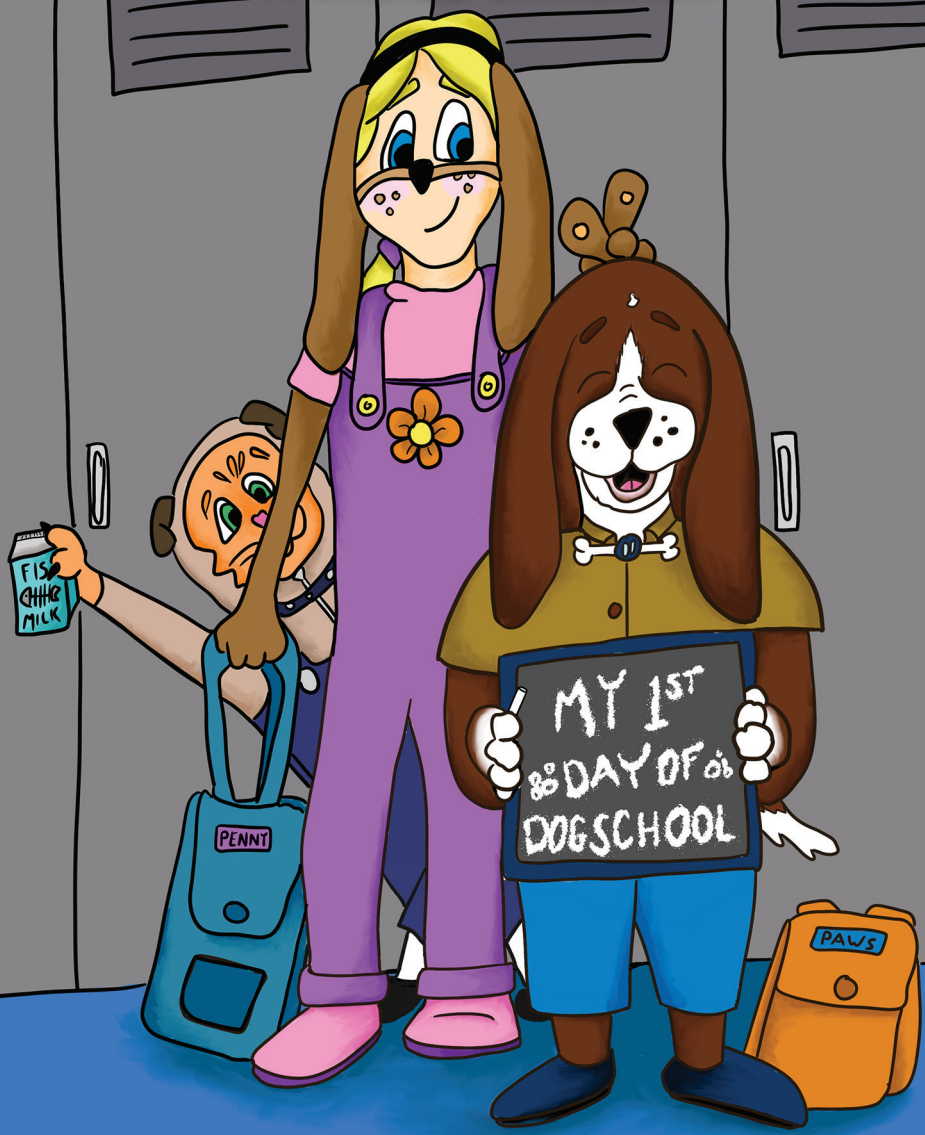


The Adventures of

Penny & Paws

"A Choice Situation"



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Penny & Paws
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Paws couldn't sleep. This morning, he was going to learn which behavioral school his family would be allowing him to choose. The dog had tossed and turned, trying to get a good night's rest. He even tried wearing an eyemask, drinking kibble tea, and counting sheep (which didn't help because he always imagined herding them).

Paws was relieved when he heard the dog whistle he had engineered into his alarm clock go off. He got out of bed, stretched, and walked over to his dresser. The hound hummed happily as he ran a brush over his fur, thinking about all the new friends he was going to make.

After spraying on some fleaodorant, Paws quickly changed out of his pajamas and into his clothes. That's when he heard a familiar voice. "Hey, Paws. Are you up yet?"

"I'll be right there, Penny," Paws hollered back as he licked his thumb and wiped down a stubborn bit of fur on top of his head.

Then Paws stepped into the doghouse's specially designed elevator. Soft music played for a moment before a small ding sounded, indicating the elevator had reached the top floor. When he opened the front door to his doghouse he saw Penny standing there waiting for him. "It's our first day of school!" Penny cheered. "I couldn't sleep a wink!"



FETCH'S
TREATS

Paws rubbed his eyes. Penny was dressed, head-to-toe, in a full dog costume! “Penny! What’s going on here? You’re not a dog!”

“Throw me a bone,” Penny replied. “I’ve been working on this costume all night! Besides, I wanted to blend in as I go on another adventure with you.”

“Well, I have to admit,” Paws stated while looking it over. “It does look amazing. But humans aren’t allowed to go to obedience school...at least I don’t think.”

“It’s okay, Paws. We got permission slips from all the schools,” Penny replied as they began to walk down the sidewalk.

“What do you mean, schools?” the dog asked. “You mean there’s more than one? Is there an obedience college or something?”

Penny laughed. “No, silly. My parents wanted you to try different types of dog schools today, so that you could pick what works best for you!”



PAWS
THINKTANK

WELCOME

After walking down the sidewalk, the duo reached a large red brick building. “Welcome to Public School for Dogs,” Penny cheered. “Everyone is welcome here!”

“Wow,” Paws said before letting out a whistle. “It’s so big! I’d better stick with you, Penny. I don’t want to get lost in the shuffle.”

“I won’t lose you, Paws,” Penny smiled, while tapping her fake dog nose. “This bloodhound never loses a scent!”

Before Penny could say another word, the morning school bell went off, and the duo had to rush to get to their first class. They were amazed at the number of students in the classroom. After they found their seats, Mrs. Dogwood, the instructor, began their first lesson on not begging at the table for scraps.

“This is so hard,” Paws said, writing down notes. “You know how I love to get scrappy!”

“Shhhh,” came the sound of a familiar voice. “I’m trying to concentrate over here!”

Penny and Paws looked in the direction of the voice and saw the face of a familiar cat, also dressed up in a dog costume, with his arms crossed, glaring at them.



PUBLIC
DOG SCHOOL



“Mr. Purrsnickety?!” Penny & Paws said at the same time, before lowering their voices. “What are you doing here?!”

“Curiosity,” the cat whispered back to them. “You know the old saying, ‘Curiosity thrilled the cat.’”

“That’s not the saying,” Paws shook his head. “It’s ‘Curiosity killed the cat.’”

Mr. Purrsnickety’s eyes grew wide. “That’s the first I’ve heard of that! What in the world are they teaching here?!”

The cat immediately raised its paw to ask the teacher about the phrase, but she was too busy helping other students. “You’ve got a long wait,” said a chihuahua named Eeka, who was sitting next to the three of them. “The classes are so full that it’s hard for her to give everyone her attention.”

“Are the classes this full at the school in the next neighborhood?” Mr. Purrsnickety asked.

“No,” Eeka replied. “But you can’t go there because you can only attend the public school in the district where you live. The other is fenced off to you.”

“At least the education is free at this one,” Penny chimed in. “You can’t beat saving a few dollars for wondrous things such as buying lunch!”



2 LEAD OR NOT 2 LEAD?

TEACH CAT POOD DOG
FETCH FOR DUMBIES

Penny, being overexcited, had stood up from her seat when she mentioned lunch, and this caught the attention of a large dog not far away from them. He was now grinning at them.

“Oh, no,” Eeka said. “You got the attention of Ogurr, the bullydog. He thinks he’s a hero because he likes to take other people’s lunch money and give it to those in need, which ends up being himself.”

The school bell gave a quick ring, signaling the end of the first class. “Maybe now is the time we tuck tail and visit another school,” Paws said nervously. “Maybe one where there is a little less...uh, social interaction.”

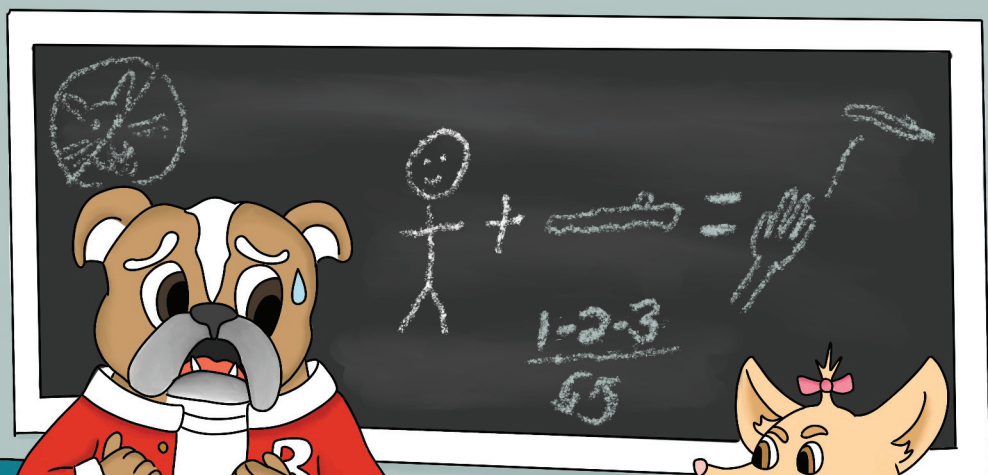
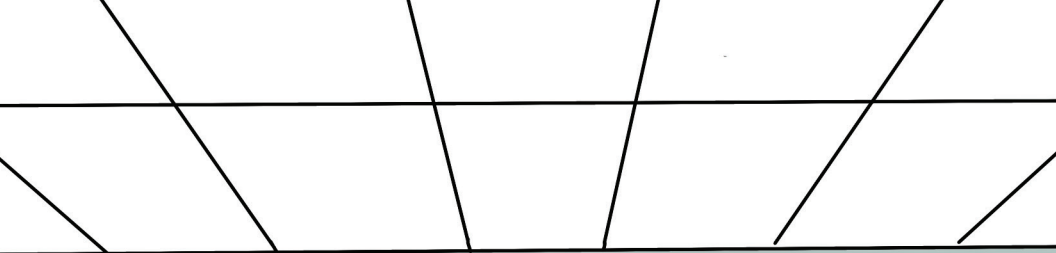
“I’m going with you!” Mr. Purrsnickety said. “I’m rather fond of keeping my tuna fish sandwich. It has hairball control. Trust me, I need that.”

“I wish I could go with you,” Eeka sighed. “But public dog school is all my family can afford.”

“But what about Ogurr?” Paws asked. “Aren’t you scared?”

The Chihuahua chuckled and held up her tiny fists while striking a karate pose. “I’m not scared of that big cur. My bark is worse than my bite, and he hasn’t seen me unleashed!”

The bell rang, signaling that the class was over. “That means it’s time to go to another room for a small break,” Eeka said. “I wish you could join us. We just got a fresh box of old socks with knots tied into one end. They are great for tug-of-war!”



“You’re tugging at our heartstrings now,” Paws said, with a touch of drool forming on his lips. “But as much as we’d like to play, we’ve got to get over to try the private school, and then the brand new charter school.”

“We can’t go to the charter school,” Penny said. “Momma said they threw out all those plans because some locals officials didn’t want one to open.”

“Why would they block a new school for dogs?” Paws asked. “Weren’t they going to buy and reopen a building that the school district closed?”

“Well, I heard the public-school officials are going to demolish that building instead,” Eeka answered. “They don’t want dogs choosing the free charter school...”

After saying goodbye, Penny, Paws, and Mr. Purrsnickety were back out onto the sidewalk, following the map that Penny’s mom had drawn for them. “I wonder what a private school will be like,” Penny said, spotting the building in the distance.

“I heard it’s more rigorous,” Paws stated while walking up to the school door. “Word around the hydrant is that they specialize in levels K through 9.”

Mr. Purrsnickety crossed his arms and stuck his nose up. “That sounds nice, but do they have fish heads on their lunch menu? I have a sensitive stomach, you know.”

“You’re not even supposed to be here,” Penny chuckled as they approached the school’s doors.



“Humph!” Mr. Purrsnickety said while sticking his pink nose in the air.

“I see you three do not have school caps,” a dalmatian guard dog said, while opening the door to let them in. “Everyone here is required to wear one; we have a dress code.”

“Oh, we didn’t know that,” Paws replied. “Now what are we supposed to do?”

“Don’t worry,” the guard replied with a smile. “We keep a few extra in a locker right here for situations just like this. Let me get one for each of you.”

“Phew!” Penny said. “Thank you, Mr., um..”

“Spotz,” he replied. “I keep an eye on the place.”

Spotz turned around and dug into the locker, but he paused and started sniffing the air. With an eyebrow raised he turned around and gave Mr. Purrsnickety a suspicious look. “Hmm,” he said. “You are the cattiest-smelling dog I’ve ever met. Do you have your license on you by any chance?”

“Gulp,” Mr. Purrsnickety swallowed nervously while pulling at his collar. “I, uh, um, I must have left my ID on my other collar.”

“Hmm,” Spotz said briefly, before reaching into his pocket and pulling out a small catnip stuffed toy mouse. “I found this in the lost and found..”



“Mine!” Mr. Purrsnickety shouted while trying to take it from the unsurprised dalmatian, who just held it up out of the cat’s reach.

“Looks like the cat is out of the bag,” chuckled Paws, whispering to Penny.

Spotz opened the door, tossing the toy mouse outside, letting the excited cat chase after it. The guard dog sneezed a couple of times before locking the doors behind him. “Sorry. I’ve got cat allergies. They give me a runny nose and watery eyes. It can blur my vision.”

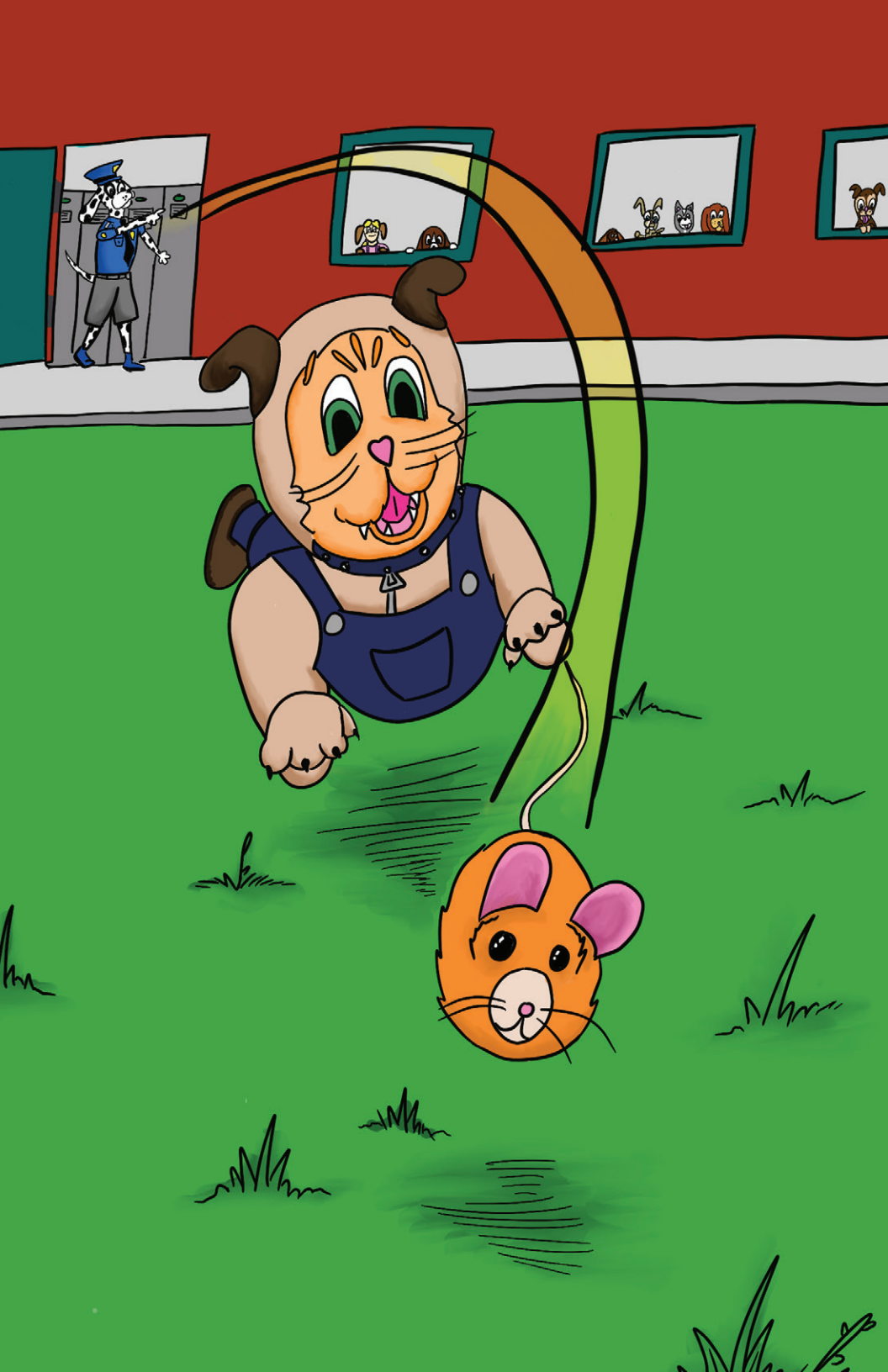
Spotz blew his nose into a kerchief. “You would not believe how many non-dogs try to sneak into our school,” Spotz said, while wiping his at his eyes. “But I’ve got a good eye and nose about these things. No fake canine is going to fool me! Now you two, have fun in class!”

The pair shared a quick look and hurried to their class, which was a short walk and through a door to their right. “Phew,” Paws whispered. “That was a close one!”

“Why do you say that Paws?” Penny said. “We have a permission slip.”

Paws did a small burp. “Sorry, Penny. I ate those slips. I thought it was just your homework!”

Penny did not look surprised and was going to say something but was distracted by what she saw when entering the classroom. “Wow, the class sizes here are much smaller!”



Luckily, they found two empty chairs with the literature stacked on them, with notebooks and papers, ready to go. The teacher, a small, gray-haired man named Mr. Barclay, was pointing at some fetching techniques that he had illustrated on the chalkboard. “I didn’t know about these other ways to approach the game of fetch,” Paws said. “This is amazing!”

“If you have any questions,” Mr. Barclay said. “Just raise your paw, and I will make sure you receive all the help you need. Remember, next week you’ll all be assigned a pet project.”

“Mr. Barclay seems nice,” Penny said.

“He’s cool,” said a Dachshund sitting close to them.

The wiener dog wore sunglasses, a spiked collar, and a leather jacket with the name Jerry written on the back in rhinestones. “Mr. Barclay told me, ‘Jerry, I’m here to teach you how to overcome your less-than-cool behaviors, like chewing up your family’s slippers and chasing the paperboy.’”

“That’s pretty naughty,” Paws said. “I’m glad the teacher was able to help you out. It definitely sounds like it may be the school I choose.”

“If your family can afford it,” Jerry said. “Most people can’t afford to pay for two schools.”

Penny looked confused. “What do you mean, two schools? That doesn’t make sense if you’re only going to one.”



Jerry lowered his sunglasses a little to look Penny and Paws in the eyes. “Didn’t anyone tell you? Your family’s property taxes pay for public school, but if you choose to go to private school, you have to pay for that, too. Hence, your family is forced to pay for private school out of their own pockets.

“That doesn’t seem fair,” Penny said. “I’m glad we were able to qualify for financial aid and a canine scholarship at least.”

“I like this setup,” Paws said. “Especially the cool teachers who have more time for their students due to smaller class sizes, and less chance of running into bullies.”

“If you like that Paws,” Penny said. “I think you’re really going to love the next schooling option.”

“What do you think that will be, Penny?” Paws asked, while in his head picturing them both working in a scientific lab on a space station.

“I can’t wait to show you,” Penny said as she led him out of the school. “Let’s follow our noses!”

At first, Paws did not understand what Penny was talking about. The dog sniffed the air and could only smell the flowers that had been planted along the sidewalk. Then, as they walked further, a new scent arose. “Mmm,” Penny said, sniffing the air. “Do you smell what I smell?”

Paws nodded. “That’s a pretty good nose you have there, Penny. I think you may be part dog after all!”



Penny chuckled. “When it comes to fresh-baked cookies,” she said with a grin. “There’s no trail I can’t follow!”

“Do you notice anything familiar?” Paws said as he started picking up the pace.

Penny started to run as well. “Those aren’t just any cookies, those are Momma’s extra gooey chipperoonies! Let’s go!”

Penny & Paws ran home as fast as they could, into the kitchen, and up to the large plate of delicious cookies. “We’re home and ready to learn!” they both cheered.

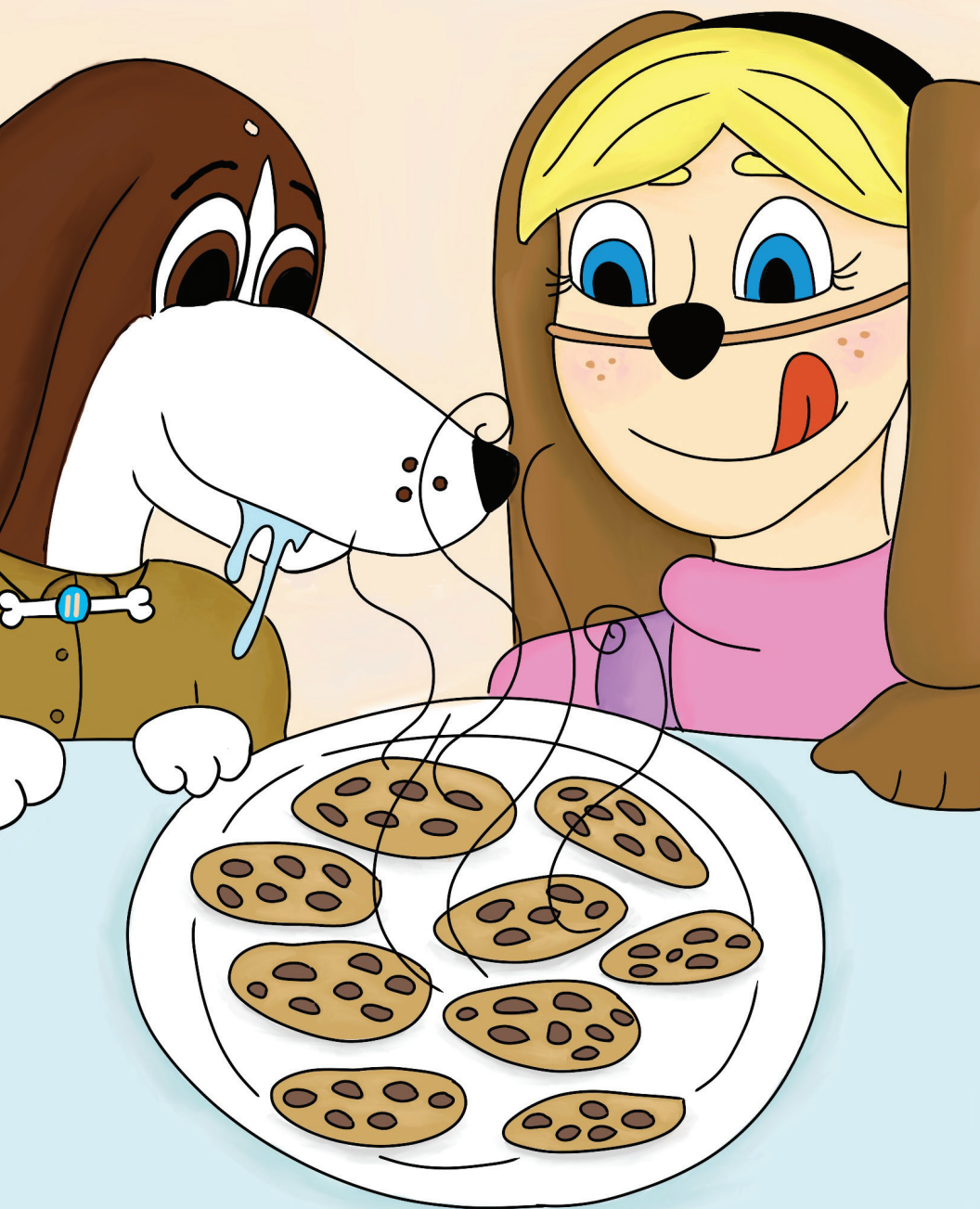
“Now wait a minute, you two,” Penny’s mom said. “These have to cool down a little. Plus, we have to set you up for your homeschooling classes.”

“Is it going to be like my normal homeschooling, Mom?” Penny asked. “Can I still take some of Paws’ classes?”

“Are you begging?” Penny’s mom laughed. “Because you and Paws both know, that’s not allowed at the table.”

“I like the idea of homeschooling,” Paws said, before glancing at the plate of cookies again. “But some of these rules are going to be too hard to follow!”

“You don’t have to worry, Paws. Momma is the best teacher!” Penny explained. “She’s been watching us grow up and knows a lot about our strengths and



weaknesses in certain areas, so she knows where to focus as we learn.”

“But shouldn’t she have a degree?” Paws worried. “Don’t you have to go to college or be a genius or something?”

“I use teaching aids that I get from educational institutions. There are books, DVDs, and even online classes that help,” Penny’s mom replied. “My job is to help my loved ones be all they can be.”

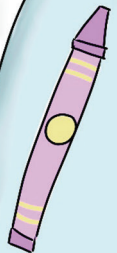
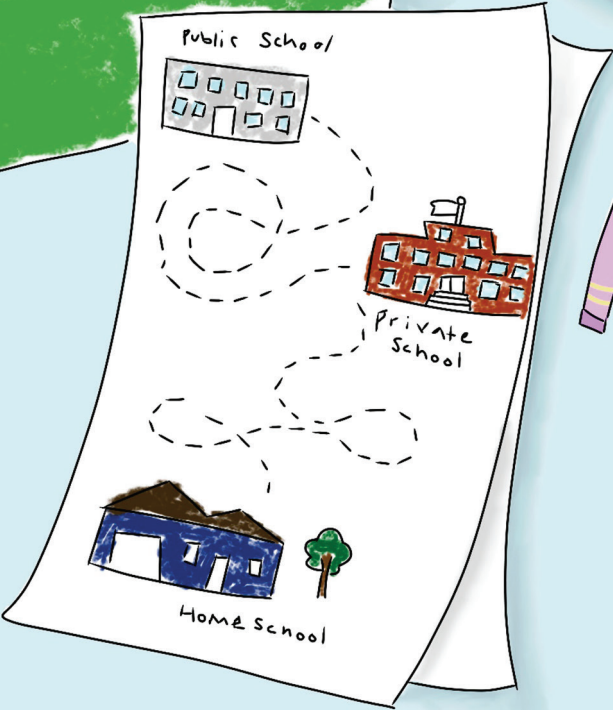
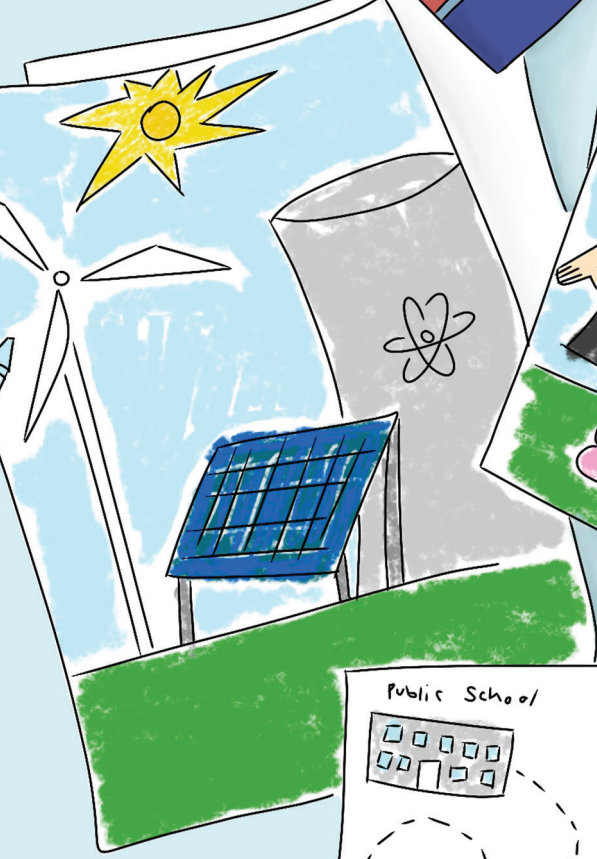
“I told you she was the best,” Penny said, feeling proud that her mother was so involved in her and Paws’s education. “And the chipperoonies are not that bad either!”

Paws thought about it a moment and said, “You know, I think I like it here the best. I could even sleep in a little bit.”

Penny and her mom both raised their eyebrows at that statement. “Oh, no,” Penny said. “Mom knows how important it is for homeschoolers to have a schedule and stick to it. Sure, we can break things up with interesting field trips and similar activities, but for the most part, we try to stick to a routine. This is why some homeschoolers do so well when compared to the other types of schools.”

“But what about being social?” Paws asked. “When I visited the public and private schools, there were lots of other dogs to meet and become friends with.”

“Oh, there are plenty of co-ops,” Penny’s mom said. “Co-ops are groups where parents and students can



come together to share resources, duties, and even social opportunities. I have so much fun meeting with like-minded parents. It helps build a community.”

Paws sighed. “I just wish I could see all the new friends I made today.”

“Would you two like to share some of these cookies out back?” Penny’s mom asked while picking up the plate and heading for the back door.

Penny and Paws were not about to say no; the smell of the chocolate chips was hovering past them. Paws thought his feet were nearly lifting off the ground! When they both stepped outside, they were surprised by what they saw. All of the new friends they had met that day at the other schools were there to greet them. “Just because you’re not attending the same school doesn’t mean we can’t be friends!” Jerry stated as Penny’s mom passed the plate of chipperoonies around.

Mr. Purrsnickety, Eeka, Ogurr, Jerry, and even Spotz were there to celebrate Paw’s decision! They all cheered when they saw Penny and Paws raising their glasses of cold milk. “I’d like to propose a toast!” Paws said. “To good friends and the freedom to choose what type of education works best for me!”

“Toast?!” Ogurr said, looking confused. “Me thought we wuz’ eating cookies!”



Paws Joke Kennel

Q: Why did the math book look so sad?

A: Because it had too many problems.

Q: Why did the student eat his homework?

A: Because the teacher said it was a piece of cake.

Q: Why can't you do math in the jungle?

A: Because there are too many cheetahs!

Q: Why did the teacher go to the beach?

A: To test the waters.

Q: Why was the teacher cross-eyed?

A: Because she couldn't control her pupils!

Q: Why was the geometry book so adorable?

A: Because it had all the right angles.

Q: Why did the bulldog fail training school?

A: He kept eating his own homework.

Q: What's a teacher's favorite nation?

A: Expla-nation!

Q: Why did dog bark at the computer?

A: To see if his barks were worse than its bytes.



Mick McArt is the graphic designer and project manager for the Mackinac Center for Public Policy. Mick has authored many books, including the Tales of Wordishure series and The Unremembered Realms™. Located in Midland, Michigan, and founded in 1987, the Mackinac Center is a nonpartisan research and educational institute that is dedicated to advancing liberty and opportunity for all people through research and education.



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